

*Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historical Park
Park Advisory Commission Meeting*

March 16, 2006

Middletown Town Hall
Middletown, Virginia

Meeting Agenda

- I) General Introductions
- II) Review and Approval of Minutes from 19 January 2006 meeting (10 minutes)
- III) GMP Status Update (20 minutes)
- IV) Park Foundation Planning and Commissioner Input (30 minutes)
- V) National Park Service Visitor Center Planning; presentation and discussion – Ms. Dawn Godwin, NPS Washington Office, Park Planning and Special Studies Division (75 minutes)
- VI) Old Business
 - bylaws
- VII) New Business
- VIII) Next Meeting – 18 May 2006 in Strasburg

Meeting Notes

Commission members in attendance: Diann Jacox, Designated Federal Official (DFO); Kris Tierney, Vice Chair; Elizabeth McClung; Howard Kittell; Gene Dicks; Jim Smalls; Richard Kleese; Patrick Farris; Fred Andreae; Dan Stickley

Commission members absent: Alson Smith; Roy Downey; Gary Rinkerman; Mary Bowser

Others in attendance: Chris Stubbs, NPS; Marcus Ordonez, Shenandoah Co. Parks & Rec.; Steven Stubbs, NPS; Lisa McDonald, Shenandoah Valley Herald; Heather Richards, Potomac Conservancy; John Sygielski, Lord Fairfax Community College; Harold Strosnider, local resident; Suzanne Chilson, Cedar Creek Battlefield Foundation; Sarah Reid, Winchester Star; Dawn Godwin, NPS

Vice-Chair Kris Tierney chaired the meeting.

The notes from the 19 January 2006 meeting were reviewed and approved as written.

Mr. Chris Stubbs of the National Park Service provided a general management plan status update to the Commission, the details of which were handed out to the Commissioners and the public.

Mr. Stubbs then gave a presentation on the park's foundation plan, focusing specifically on fundamental resources and values. After the brief presentation, Mr. Stubbs facilitated a scoping session in which the Commissioners provided input on fundamental resources and values within the park. The scoping results are appended to these commission notes.

There was a presentation from Ms. Dawn Godwin from the NPS Washington Office Division of Park Planning and Special Studies on planning for facilities and visitor experience. The notes from Ms. Godwin's PowerPoint presentation will be handed out at the May commission meeting. After her presentation, Ms. Godwin and Mr. Stubbs facilitated a scoping session on visitor experience. The scoping results are appended to these commission notes.

There was a discussion of the draft by-laws. Superintendent Diann Jacox stated that the response from the solicitor on this document indicated that there are several points that are contrary to Federal Advisory Committee Act regulations, and it is generally felt that the by-laws are too lengthy and complex. Chairperson Tierney suggested that it was not a good use of time at the full Commission meeting to discuss the by-laws point-by-point; rather, the subcommittee should take up the by-laws with the goal of simplifying them. Mr. Smalls suggested having no by-laws as they are not necessary for the Commission to fully function.

A motion was made that the subcommittee take up the by-laws with the goal of simplifying them. Mr. Stubbs will participate in the committee in addition to serving as its organizer. The motion passed.

There was a discussion of the Town of Strasburg vacancy on the Commission, and concern rose that this position has not been filled. Ms. Jacox stated that she has received no reply from Strasburg regarding their nomination, but would have a formal letter sent from the NPS to Strasburg regarding this nomination. There was a discussion about whether the Commission would send a separate letter to the Town of Strasburg urging them to provide a nomination for this important position.

A motion was made that the Commission would send a separate letter. The motion passed and it was agreed that Chairperson Bowser would write the letter.

After a brief discussion of the next meeting, which will be on 18 May 2006 in Strasburg, the meeting was adjourned.

List of handouts provided at 16 March 2006 meeting

1. Meeting agenda
2. Minutes from 19 January 2006 Commission meeting
3. GMP status update

Appendix I – Scoping Notes on Fundamental Resources and Values

The definition of fundamental resources and values and other resources and values is summarized as:

Fundamental Resources and Values

- Particular features, systems, structures, processes, experiences, stories, scenes, sounds, landscapes, etc. that are key to achieving the park's purpose and maintaining its significance
- Resources that will be given primary consideration during planning and management

Other Important Resources and Values

- Resources that are important to planning and management, but not fundamental

Then the group engaged in a discussion of fundamental and other resources and values. They are, in no particular order of importance:

- There are at least two historic structures in the park that retain their integrity: Belle Grove and Harmony Hall – the settings and stories associated with these historic structures are significant
- The Harriet Robinson / Belle Grove story
- The relationship between slaves and owners during plantation life
- Slavery and plantation community
- Landscapes / land use / the rustic, rural character of the area
- Natural and historical landscapes
- Views and the viewshed – the viewshed hasn't changed much since the Civil War
- Transportation and the Valley Pike
 - Issues associated with Valley settlement
 - Interpretation of the Valley Pike: from a hunting path to a wagon road to the turnpike to Route 11
 - Commerce in the Valley – moving crops and other products
- The Shenandoah Valley as America's first frontier (may be some Native American sensitivity to this)
- Civil War – the topography was critical to the battle; this topography has changed very little
- The Civil War
 - The Valley was in the Federal plan to end the War
 - Valley was a "backdoor" to Richmond and Washington
 - Losing the Valley was the "beginning of the end" of the Confederacy or the "beginning of the end" of the War
 - There were no further threats to DC once the Valley was in Union control and they could focus on Lee's army
 - The Battle of Cedar Creek was strategically critical to the war
- Agriculture

- The natural environment and its relationship to the built environment
- Signal Knob
- The topography of the Valley funneled travel, transportation, and commerce
- The Valley as a breadbasket – this was important during the Civil War

Appendix II – Scoping Notes on Facilities and Visitor Experience

How should visitors receive information?

- Small groups at Belle Grove
- Battlefield tours
- Acquire the ability to service large groups at the annual reenactment
- Harmony Hall tours should be held
- Visitors should be able to be out of their cars, on the landscape, either in groups or having a private experience

Mobility

- We need to consider the mobility-impaired as well as those more ambulatory
- Provide some wheelchair access to important sites as appropriate

What do we want to interpret?

- “Depends on the site”
- Technology may help reduce a clutter of signs on the landscape
- Troop movements and military history important, but must be careful not to clutter landscape
- Maybe have a hub with a panoramic view and a wayside keyed into attractions
- Multiple interpretive media
- Some places simply require a “live” interpreter so individual tours can be tailored to the audience

Development Zoning / Visitor Center

- Should be in a central location
- We need to think about our impact and other development we could spur
- Possibility of having a multi-use or shared facility with partners
- Possible interim solution – co-locating with Lord Fairfax
- Should have a panoramic view of the battlefield and park
- Are there existing facilities that could be used?